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Preface

The 12th meeting of the European Calcium Society

The 12th Meeting of the European Calcium Society (ECS) took place from the 9th to the 12th of September 2012 at the University of Toulouse in Southern France. The meeting was organized by Marc Moreau, Catherine Leclerc and their colleagues and supported by an International Scientific Committee. They put together an excellent program that attracted more than 200 scientists from 26 different countries, not only from Europe, but also from Australia, North- and South America, Japan, China, India, Russia, and the Middle East. The program was started with a Plenary Lecture by Jörg Kudla from the University of Münster, Germany, who gave a fascinating overview on Ca^{2+}-signaling in plants. Since plant biology was often underrepresented at previous meetings it was appreciated that at this meeting Ca^{2+}-signaling in plants was represented by a number of outstanding lectures given by Tina Romeis from the Free University of Berlin, by Hillel Fromm from the University of Tel-Aviv, Israel, and by David Barker from CNRS in Auzeville, France.

The scientific program was divided into 7 different symposia and 2 poster sessions with more than 110 posters. Two poster prizes sponsored by ECS were awarded to Elke Decrock from the Ghent University in Belgium and to Cecilia Cheval from CNRS in Castanet-Tolosan, France, and 1 poster prize sponsored by GDRE and Nikon was awarded to Takeharu Nagai from Osaka University, Japan. The Drabikowski award for the best oral presentation selected from the submitted abstracts was given to Benjamin Bonneau from the University of Lyon, France. The meeting was closed with the third Sir Michael Berridge Lecture delivered by Anjana Rao from the La Jolla Institute for Allergy and Immunology in California, USA. The lecture was sponsored by Biochimica Biophysica Acta and the ECS. Anjana Rao gave a fascinating in-depth view on the interplay between store-operated calcium entry, orchestrated by ORAI and STIM, and the NFAT family of Ca^{2+}-regulated transcription factors which enter the nucleus due to the dephosphorylation by the Ca^{2+}-dependent phosphatase calcineurin. Dr. Rao pointed out that a number of loss-of-function mutations of ORAI1 resulted in severe T cell immune deficiencies of patients.

The meeting spanned a wide range of calcium-dependent processes such as structural aspects of calcium-binding proteins, the role of calcium signaling in memory and neurodegenerative diseases, in inflammatory processes and stress, or during development and in stem cells. One session was devoted to calcium homeostasis in mitochondria, a topic which in recent years became increasingly important due to its important role for the cell fate including apoptosis.

Supporting young researchers is one of the main interests of ECS meetings. This time a total number of 12 fellowships were offered by the ECS to young scientists, coming from Europe, Middle East, Asia and South America.

In summary, this was an excellent, well organized and well attended meeting, and we have to thank our colleagues from Toulouse for their warm and generous hospitality. We are looking forward to the fourth and fifth ECS workshops in 2013 in Leuven, Belgium, and in Logonna-Daoulas, France, respectively, followed by the 13th ECS Calcium Meeting in Aix-en-Provence, France in September 2014.

The symposium was mainly supported by the following sponsors: the ECS, the Université and the Mairie de Toulouse, FRBT, AIB, RSV, CNRS, GDRE, Nikon, Hamamatsu, Région Midi-Pyrénées, HSORD, Dominique Dutscher, Euromedex, Sarstedt, Thermo Scientific, and Andor Technology.

Dr. Jacques Haiech is a professor at the School of Biotechnological Engineering of Strasbourg (France). He is also an expert in biotechnology and bioinformatics and acts as an expert counselor for the French Ministry of Research in life science domain. His main area of research is the role of calmodulin in deciphering calcium signals. He obtained his Masters in mathematics in 1974 and his PhD in biochemistry in 1978. In 1987 and 1993, he was a visiting associate professor of the Pharmacology Department of Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, and a visiting professor at Northwestern University in the Molecular Pharmacology Department, Chicago (USA). He is the author of more than 150 scientific publications and awarded 'Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite', a high French distinction for outstanding services to the country.

Dr. Claus W. Heizmann is Professor of Clinical Biochemistry at the University of Zurich in Switzerland. He received his Diploma in Chemistry from the University of Basel and his PhD in 1970 from the University of Konstanz, Germany. Subsequently he was trained as a post-doctoral fellow in the laboratory of Dr. Edmond Fischer at the University of Washington, Seattle and at the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich. In 1989–2007 he was Director of Clinical Chemistry and Biochemistry at the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Zurich. His research focuses on the structure and functions of calcium-binding proteins and RAGE in health and disease. Recently, he edited the book : Calcium-Binding Proteins and RAGE: from structural basics to clinical applications published in: Methods in Molecular Biology, Vol 963, Springer Protocols/Humana Press, 2013.

Dr. Joachim Krebs has been working in the field of calcium-binding and calcium-transporting proteins for many years. After receiving his PhD from the University of Tübingen, Germany, he spent 2 years as a postdoctoral fellow in the Lab of Prof. R.J.P. Williams at the Institute of Inorganic Chemistry at the University of Oxford, UK. In 1977 he accepted a position at the Institute of Biochemistry at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich, Switzerland. He has authored, coauthored, and edited numerous articles in international journals and books in the field of calcium biochemistry and calcium signaling. After his retirement from the ETH he continued his research at the Department of NMR based Structural Biology of the Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Göttingen, Germany. Recently, he edited together with Marek Michalak from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, the book "Calcium: A Matter of Life or Death", published by Elsevier in 2007.

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